DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91125

PROUST, JOYCE, AND THE THEORY OF METAPHOR

Randolph Splitter

HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER 3

March 1978

Proust, Joyce, and the Theory of Metaphor

One of the most significant propositions of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is that "the unconscious" is structured like a language, that (for example) the workings of a dream may be defined in terms of linguistic concepts like metaphor and metonymy.[1] Roman Jakobson, analyzing two different types of aphasia, had specifically divided rhetorical functions into the two poles of metaphor and metonymy, and this division has proved influential in structural/semiological theory, despite the fact that no one agrees on what actually fits into either category.[2] Lacan's psychoanalytic corollary to Jakobson's hypothesis, which equates metaphor with the Freudian mechanism of condensation and metonymy with displacement, breaks down the distinction between literary and psychoanalytic categories, suggesting that Freudian interpretation and literary analysis are analogous processes. In this paper I would like to pursue that suggestion by examining certain metaphorical structures in the work of Proust and Joyce, beginning with one particular metaphor -- namely, flowers -- that appears, with surprisingly similar connotations, in the work of both writers. I am concentrating on the idea of metaphor, defined broadly, because it seems to me more basic, more essential (than metonymy) to the construction of meaning in literature. Indeed, the idea of metaphor is essential to Proust's (or at least his protagonist Marcel's) theories about art and literature.[3] I don't

intend to blur the differences between Proust and Joyce, but I think the remarkable structural parallels between their work can help us to draw certain conclusions about the possibilities of literary meaning and literary interpretation. In fact, this examination of metaphor -- which does not limit itself to Lacan's definitions -- may enable us to see both Freudian interpretation and literary analysis in a new light.

Both Proust and Joyce explore the ambiguities of sexual relations, make jealousy a condition of friendship and love, imply (in Joyce's words) that amor matris may be the only true thing in life, investigate "mourning and melancholia," associate death with the transcendence of art, try to stop time or reverse it or escape it, try to solve the riddle of male/female differences, blur the distinction between inner and outer worlds, develop their own theories of magical substances or essences, and invent their own myths of artistic creation or "procreation." The differences between Joyce and Proust -- in the treatment of homosexuality, in the emphasis on fathers as well as mothers -- are revealing and significant, but their complex, dialectical "theories" of the relation between art and life, between inner and outer worlds, set them apart from most other writers, who lack their profound self-awareness. Metaphors, which combine "literal" and "figurative" meanings, offer at least the possibility of bridging the gap between art and life, between fantasy and reality.

À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs, the title of the second volume of Proust's Recherche, turns flowers into a metaphor for the incipient, emerging, budding sexuality of adolescent girls, but this association is already implied by the real flowers, the pink and white

hawthorns, of Combray, which move the young Marcel by their visual beauty. Marcel associates the festal flowers with celebrations of the Virgin Mary -- "in its cool, rosy garments, a Catholic bush" (S,108/I,140)[4] -- and just as he earlier imagined the blossoming of the flowers in church as the careless, spontaneous movement of "a young girl in white" (S,86/I,112), so now he identifies the pink hawthorn with the little girl (Gilberte), with reddish hair and pink freckles, that he sees behind the hedge. Gilberte's mother, who appears now as "a lady in white" (S,109/I,141), is actually the same mysterious "lady in pink," an actress or courtesan and not quite a lady, whom Marcel has met at his uncle Adolphe's. The color of the hawthorns is, like the color associated with the women, ambiguous, variable, and deceptive. In fact, the pale buds of the hawthorn, when they open, disclose a "blood-red stain," which suggests "even more strongly than the full-blown flowers the special, irresistible quality of the hawthorn-tree" (S,107/I,140).

The opposition between pink and innocent white,[5] the association with the Virgin Mary, with young girls, and with a lady who isn't an innocent young girl, the particular emphasis on blossoming, the opening of buds into mature and beautiful flowers, the glimpse of the girl behind the hedge, through an arch of pink flowers, and the crucial exposure of a blood-red stain on the inside of pale buds all imply an underlying preoccupation with the mysteries of virginity and sex: with the loss of virginity in intercourse (the blood-red stain caused by "deflowering"), with the disillusioning metamorphosis of an innocent virgin into a not-so-innocent lady (her mother!), with the equally mysterious metamorphosis of a girl "blossoming" into a sexually

mature woman (marked, on the most literal level, by the blood-red stain of menstruation), or simply with the mysterious, frightening, barely glimpsed sight of a girl's genitals, which seems to disclose (in the fantasy of a boy familiar with his own anatomy) a blood-red wound. In short, the pink hawthorns, white flowers tinged red, are reassuringly innocent and yet ambiguously seductive at the same time, like the young, pubescent girls "in bloom" who will be Marcel's special province in love.

The jeunes filles en fleurs of Balbec, spontaneous, youthful, alive, unselfconsciously natural, like seagulls or flowers, are adolescent girls on the verge of sexual maturity, their frank, uninhibited manners less sexual than tomboyish. In fact, these athletic, tomboyish girls -- the cyclist Albertine who plays golf and "ferret" and wears a polo cap, the girl who plays leapfrog with the old gentleman, as well as the Gilberte who plays prisoner's base -- may remind Marcel of his own boyish, adolescent self. This narcissistic desire for someone like himself reduces (but does not eliminate) the mysterious and alien "otherness" of the other person, helping him to close the gap between himself and the unpossessible person that he loves. In many ways, however, these healthy, tomboyish girls are the exact opposites of sickly, nervous, overly mannered, possibly even effeminate (?) Marcel, presenting him with the self-sustaining "life" that he both lacks and desires. In fact, "life" seems to be a magical quality that the other person always possesses, the mysterious essence of the life that person leads when one is not around, the evanescent, insubstantial quality that one tries to possess for oneself. Ironically, Marcel

takes Andree for a "healthy, primitive creature" like the rest of the band, but she turns out to be "too intellectual, too neurotic, too sickly, too much like myself" (JF377/I,943). The narcissistic element in love has to contend with the desire to possess what one doesn't have, the attraction for one's opposite.

The confusion about the appearance, the identity, even the sex of the person one loves -- the ambiguous, transitional condition of jeunes filles en fleurs -- is illustrated by Elstir's remarkable portrait of "Miss Sacripant," who turns out to be Odette in her pre-Swann days. With short hair, a "mob-cap," and a cigarette in her hand, the model seems to be an actress "half dressed for a part [en demi-travesti]," and her appearance is so ambiguous that she seems to be first "a somewhat boyish girl" and then "an effeminate youth, vicious and pensive" (JF309-10/I,848-9). Marcel likens the meeting of two homosexuals to the pollination of a flower by a bee, as if the flower represents the "female" side of the relation, but the literal/imaginary token of virginity represented by the flower (of the jeunes filles en fleurs) is itself sexually ambiguous, an imaginary, "poeticized," feminized phallus -- in Freudian terms, a fetish -- which might suggest that young girls are not so different from boys after all.[6] Marcel may like to think of mothers as pure and virginal, but the metamorphosis of an innocent girl into a sexually mature woman frightens him. The fantasy that sexual "flowering" is not incompatible with possessing a "flower" reassures him on two counts: because it reduces the difference between himself and the "other" and because (like any fetishistic fantasy) it reduces his fear of losing his own "flower." Conversely,

the fact that women don't have penises is disturbing, and so Marcel makes a fetish of virginity, of sexual innocence, as if women lost their quasi-phallic "flowers" in sexual intercourse and only then became an alien species, the opposite sex.

For Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, as for Proust's hero Marcel, the ideal object of love is a kind of virgin temptress who appears ambiguously innocent and seductive at the same time. Marcel can't tell whether Gilberte and Albertine, with their equivocal looks, gestures, and responses, are "virtuous" or not, but the uncertainty appeals to him. Stephen thinks that the girl on the tram, Emma, is trying to seduce him, and ten years later she becomes the "temptress" of his villanelle. Even as temptress, however, she is the object of praise and homage, as if he were simply adapting a hymn to the Virgin Mary. The birdlike girl on the beach -- the identical image in which Albertine first appears to Marcel -- makes a mute appeal to him, without shame, as Gilberte may have been doing from behind the hawthorn hedge, but she is innocent and childlike, beautiful rather than sexual, something to see rather than touch. The flirtatious, nymphomaniacal, vain, narcissistic, and essentially infantile character Issy in Finnegans Wake is an exaggerated, caricatured version of these virginal temptresses, of Gerty MacDowell in Ulysses, a Lolita-like nymphet who seems to be two and twelve and twenty-two years old at the same time. In fact, Issy and her seven or twenty-eight alter egos, the flower-girls, bear a remarkable resemblance to Marcel's jeunes filles en fleurs. In both cases, the girls' childlike innocence is reassuring, promising harmless childhood games like "ferret" or dancing around the maypole in place of the dangerous sexual

complications of an experienced femme fatale.

In Joyce's work the image of flowers is not as prominent as in Proust's, but the implications are similar. The last two pages of Molly's monologue in Ulysses are strewn with references to flowers: she says she loves flowers, would like to see the place swimming in roses, remembers Bloom (in their famous rendezvous on the hill of Howth) calling her a flower of the mountain, tries to decide (playing upon the first line of a song) "shall I wear a white rose . . . or shall I wear a red," and agrees with Bloom that a woman's body is like a flower (U 781-3). Moreover, the swimming roses seem to be associated with the Bay of Gibraltar at sunset, "the sea crimson sometimes like fire," and the crimson sea with "that awful deepdown torrent," the bloody menstrual flow "pouring out" of Molly "like the sea" (U 769). Bloom speculates that Martha has a headache because she has "her roses" (U 79), and in his notes for Ulysses Joyce confirms the identification "rose -- menses."[7] But Bloom, playing upon the floral connotations of his name, signs his love letters to Martha "Henry Flower," which makes us question whether flowers are exclusively feminine. The implication seems to be that, as in Proust, these swimming menstrual flowers are fetishistic substitutes for a missing phallus, like the drawers Bloom carries around in his pocket (U 746) or the pin that "Mary" uses to keep her own drawers up: "O, Mary lost the pin of her drawers./ She didn't know what to do/ To keep it up/ To keep it up." (U 78) It, not them, as if she were keeping her phallic pin up: there are many jokes in Ulysses about keeping it up, from "U. p.: Up" to "who's getting it up." Bloom's thoughts about the pins

in women's clothing lead him to reflect that there are "No roses without thorns" (U 78), as if a woman's body were protected by sharp, prickly spikes, as if the menstrual "roses" themselves were thorny and phallic.

In the first variant of the prankquean tale, in Finnegans Wake, just before the prankquean urinates on the door of Jarl van Hoother's castle, she "pulled a rosy one" (FW 21), as if pulling a rabbit out of a hat or picking a card out of a deck (in the third variant, she "picked a blank"). The context of sexual references in the story, the fact that she is just about to urinate ("made her wit"), lead us to imagine that there is a rose growing out of her vagina, and in the second variant she "nipped a paly one" (FW 22), as if nipping a flower in the bud. Like Molly who wonders whether she should wear a white rose or a red one, the prankquean has a pale or rosy flower in her bag of tricks (pranks), a magical token of potency as well as virginity, and she pulls it out in order to show it to the Jarl. If she can pull it out, she can also cut if off, nipping it like a flower: this is just one more magic trick for her -- it grows back again -- but for the Jarl it represents the dangerous, frightening possibility that the fantasy of a female "flower" can help to ward off. The rosy/pale dichotomy suggests a contrast between menstruation and micturation, but any fluid that comes out of a woman's body seems to become a fertile, magically powerful substance, a kind of inflammatory "firewater" which enables the prankquean not only to set the hills on fire but also to inflame the Jarl's passions.

The pink and white hawthorns of Combray are Proust's version of Joyce's red and white roses, and it is the pink flowers, the pink

freckles on Gilberte's face, the lady in pink herself, that are especially seductive. The "blood-red stain" on the inside of the hawthorn buds suggests what one will find when one cuts off the flower: the imaginary flower of jeunes filles en fleurs only hides the possibility of a bloody wound, as if the fact that girls don't have penises meant only that they had lost what they had once had. The blood associated with the loss of virginity (of one's "flower") or with the onset of menstruation at puberty seems to mark the metamorphosis of girls into sexually mature women. As such, it also divides women from men: like anything alien, different, "other," it provokes both desire and fear.[8] In "Combray" there are real flowers, real hawthorns, while the prankquean's "rosy" and "paly" ones are only props for a tricky sleight-of-hand, magical, metaphorical signs of purely imaginary possibilities. Even the metaphorical flowers of jeunes filles en fleurs are, among other things, signs of youthful beauty and innocence, while Joyce's menstrual roses are a metaphor that must be taken literally or not at all, signs of a fictional, imaginary anatomy. But Joyce's emphasis on fantasy helps to explain how metaphors work, leading us to take even Proust's elegant, idealizing metaphors "literally."

If the prankquean takes the jiminies to the land of the dead, symbolically crucifies them "with the nail of a top," baptizes them, and carries them back again under her apron or pinafore (as if she were pregnant), they seem to be reborn through her, as if she were their mother. Who, after all, is their mother? Is the Jarl really their father? The prankquean tale might be trying to explain how children's parents come to be their parents, as if the children were there first.

One of its major themes is, in fact, the question of why we need two parents. As Stephen says in Ulysses, feigning a child's ignorance of a father's role in producing children: "Boccaccio's Calandrino was the first and last man who felt himself with child. Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. . . . Paternity may be a legal fiction." (U 207) A mother gives birth to, nurses, and takes care of a child, but (Stephen seems to be saying) a father just gets in the way. When the son grows up to be a father, however, he may feel differently, and, fearing the life-and-death powers that mothers seem to possess, he may even try to assert that the "only begetter" (U 207) of children is a father, not a mother, the Jarl, not the prankquean. The myths of Zeus giving birth to Athena out of his head and to Dionysus out of the "secret womb" in his thigh try to prove the same thing: Zeus's own father Kronos had a habit of eating up his children, but when Zeus gave him a rock to eat, he threw up all the children he had swallowed, as if giving birth to them once more.

Indeed, the prankquean tale is a battle of the sexes which tries to decide who is more powerful, men or women. And at the same time it tries to figure out what the difference between them really is. The prankquean, asking the Jarl for the pot of porter (please) that he as a good host should give her, also asks him a riddle about the difficulty of telling things apart: "why do I am alook alike a poss of porterpease?" She is a lookalike, like the twin jiminies (if they are identical) or like Issy's mirror-self, but is she divided by sexual differences from the Jarl? The pot of porter or peas (pease porridge hot. . .) is also the piss (wit/witter/wittest) that she spills on the

Jarl's doorstep before she goes raining in the wilderness. Confusing semen with urine, she wants to know why her piss isn't the same as -- and just as good as -- his.[9] A man's and a woman's urine look alike, although their urinary organs don't. Throughout Finnegans Wake, where the prankquean rains, Anna Livia becomes a river, and Issy tells us to listen to the sound she makes when urinating, a woman's urine becomes a fertile, lifegiving, sexually arousing, magically potent substance. The Jarl, who has been busy masturbating (laying warm or cold hands on himself), may simply be drowning in his wet bed; the children in the nursery have an oilcloth sheet to protect their bed, like the oilsheet Stephen's mother puts on his bed on the first page of A Portrait. According to the prevailing infantile theory, all sexual activity can be reduced to urinating. When the prankquean pisses on the "dour" Jarl's doorstep, trying through her wit to make him laugh -- a traditional fairy tale motif (as in the Grimm brothers' "The Golden Goose") equates laughter with release from sexual inhibition -- he shuts the door in her face, rejecting her advances. But the third time around he opens the door, extends his phallic guns ("to the whole length of the strength of his bowman's bill"), and violently, thunderously shuts the door again. In short, he shits ("ordurd," "shut up shop," "shot the shutter"), unless he simply spills more water: "And they all drank free. . . . And that was the first peace of illiterative porthery in all the flamend floody flatuous world." Despite the Jarl's noisy, phallic pretensions, the climax of the tale suggests a reversal of sexual roles: the prankquean splashes her fertile urine on the Jarl and he, as if impregnated by her, as if

he were Proust's Marcel becoming a mother to his novel, gives birth to a piece of pottery, poetry, or shit. Just as the confusion of semen and urine eliminates the difference between women and men, this infantile "anal birth" fantasy enables men to give birth as well as women.[10]

Still, the tenuous sexual relations between the Jarl and the prankquean amount to nothing more than a series of ambiguous exchanges. The Jarl ought to offer the prankquean the pot of porter but it is more likely she who offers him the ambiguous drink, the love potion intended for King Mark. He rejects her offer, she steals a jiminy. But in shutting the door, he is also literally handing her an answer -- a piece of shit or simply the word shut. From one point of view, the Jarl and the prankquean exchange nothing but words. She asks him a riddle or tells a joke in her "perusienne" dialect and he, answering her in thick Germanic "dootch," roaring like thunder, issues a thunderword, a piece of poetry. When Beckett said that Finnegans Wake "is not about something, it is that something itself,"[11] did he mean that it is only about language (how to have fun with words)? Or that words, which seem to signify "things," even more than one "thing" at a time, can take the place of the things they signify? When Joyce has the Jarl "handword" an answer, he asks us to take that answer literally, as if it were not just a word but a thing. Saying "shit!" to someone is tantamount to throwing it (hurling abuse, slinging mud), and the idea of "shitting on" someone is, conversely, a metaphor for expressing contempt. One of the projectors' schemes in Gulliver's Travels is to replace words by things, having everybody carry a supply of

conversational items on his back, but another scheme is to learn propositions by writing them down and eating them, which might have the result of turning words into shit, the "heaviest," earthiest, most material thing of all. The prankquean's witty double-entendres may inspire the Jarl to create poetry, but the context suggests that his final, illiterate, "flatuous" word is just a fart ("git the wind up"), reminding us of Swift's Aeolists (in A Tale of a Tub), who are literally inspired by hot air.

As in Swift's case, Joyce's identification of words and things, his anal humor, betrays a serious fear that there is no such thing as "spirit" after all, that the world is nothing but matter, earth, garbage, rotting corpses, shit. The garbage "tip" or middenheap or prehistoric barrow where Finn MacCool lies buried, the earth to which dead matter returns, destroys any distinction between the "waste matter" a man (Earwicker) leaves behind him and the corpse that he finally becomes. As Mulligan says, "I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissecting room." (U 8) Instead of the pure ether where Icarus would like to soar, there is only "bad gas": "they have to bore a hole in the coffins sometimes to let out the bad gas and burn it" (U 104). But this gas is the only spirit or soul a dead man has left: "Much better to close up all the orifices," thinks Bloom in the cemetery. "Yes, also. With wax. The sphincter loose. Seal up all." (U 98) The fear of losing breath or spirit or conscious life stands behind Joyce's lifelong attempt to turn base matter into gold, into air: to give life to the wildest fantasies and turn gross reality into self-sustaining art. Bloom's

quasi-scientific interest in physical "facts," the impulse behind the "Ithaca" chapter, is well illustrated by his favorite natural law, the law of falling bodies: everything returns to earth, "brightness falls from the air," and as Stephen/Icarus decides, "Not to fall was too hard" (P 162). ("This was the Fall," writes Mann in The Magic Mountain: "that first increase in the density of the spiritual, . . . the transition from the insubstantial to the substance.") But everything Joyce wrote is designed to disprove this, to prove that "Phall if you will, rise you must." Stephen, who imagines that his "soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood" (P 170), believes that he can create "out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" (P 169) which is, in one sense, himself. Recreating life out of life, Stephen's androgynous artist (in Ulysses) not only gives birth to art but, identifying himself with his creation, becomes his own "consubstantial" son. Godlike, ghostlike, seemingly dead, he may have escaped life's dangers and become invisible, impalpable, immortal, pure spirit.

As Joyce's aloof irony turns to self-mocking humor, he describes Shem's writing as his "wit's waste" and reduces the Jarl's poetry to a piece of shit, as if Keats's ode were identical with the Grecian urn and the urn itself just a piece of "illiterate pottery." But his puns do not merely reduce words to material things; they make words seem "real," alive, as if in the "virgin womb" of the imagination the word really could become flesh. Indeed Joyce (in Finnegans Wake) specifically identifies words -- the spontaneous flow of spoken language -- with the babbling sound of the "river" Anna Livia, with the

hissing sound of Issy's micturition, so that the magical, lifegiving power of a woman's urine is also the power of language. Just as the prankquean inspires or impregnates the Jarl, Anna Livia pours her babbling flow of words into the ear of sleeping Earwicker -- the words of his dream, his "stream" of consciousness -- with the implication that this living, fertile stream (like the whiskey splashed on Finnegan) will wake him up some day. Shem, borrowing his mother's verbal potency, "lifts the lifewand and the dumb speak" (FW 195), but Joyce's male artists, despite their pretensions of being autonomous, self-sufficient, androgynous creators, seem to need the literal inspiration of a maternal muse. They can create their written (silent) artifacts only by listening to the sound of living voices, particularly women's voices, as if they subscribed to the myth of the written word's dependence on the spoken that Jacques Derrida has been at such pains to dispel.[12] In fact, the Joycean artist fears that he himself is dead, alienated from life, that "life" is something which belongs to others, to the other sex, to mothers, and his whole project is, while insulating himself from life, from other people, to steal that "life" (Derrida's "presence") and instill it into his art. So Joyce tries to make Finnegans Wake seem as spontaneous, accidental, and alive as possible, as if it were an uncensored stream of consciousness, a babble of voices that has to be heard rather than read, even though it is, in reality, a dense, clotted, carefully constructed verbal artifice that has to be read rather than heard. Pretending to imitate the immediacy of life, Joyce either freezes the

present moment or lets time flow by in a continuous present, turning the last chapter of Ulysses into an unpunctuated stream of consciousness (a woman's). It is Joyce who constructs Molly's monologue, but he pretends that he is only recording her words.

If artistic inspiration is sometimes conceived of as a divine afflatus, it may not be too surprising that Joyce's myth of the dreaming father, in Finnegans Wake, resembles the medieval legend of "The Madonna's Conception Through the Ear."[13] According to the legend, the Virgin Mary was impregnated through the ear by the breath or Word of God. In the Wake the roles are largely reversed: a woman's words penetrate a man's ear, and it is in the virgin womb of the artist's imagination that the word is made flesh. Some medieval paintings show the Virgin Mary being "impregnated" through the eye, not the ear, by a divine beam of light,[14] and Proust's Marcel, whose eyes are pierced by the light cast from Mme. de Guermantes's eyes, who fears the darkness because whatever he can't see may no longer be there, seems to share the belief that light (like the light projected by the magic lantern) is a magical, fertile, almost supernatural substance. Like the Impressionist painters, Proust realizes that we see not the object itself but the (changing) light reflected from it, and yet this does not mean that we are condemned to a world of unstable, unreal appearances: light appears, instead, to be the highly distilled essence of the object, the Joycean claritas that the image projects. More mystically, the Berkeleian archdruid in Finnegans Wake claims to see the inner light that is not reflected from the object, the inner reality or "inscape," and in A Portrait Stephen decides that he is not

interested in the colors of words after all. Marcel too implies that the essence of the object is hidden inside it, but ultimately his quasi-platonic essences are the rarefied, refined distillations of a physical, "sensible" world, tokens of exchange between the world and himself. Like Joyce, like his favorite con-artist Lemoine pretending to turn earthy carbon into dazzling, light-reflecting, valuable diamonds, Proust would like to turn base matter into light, into air, to make the dense substance of the world almost insubstantial -- but not quite, because then it would no longer be real.[15]

As a child Marcel thinks that his mother's presence is a kind of magical substance (her kiss) which he can literally assimilate into himself and without which his life has no real meaning. This magical substance belongs to his mother but can become independent of her, something to comfort him in her absence, and if he manages to possess it, it comes to signify not his mother's presence but his own, a kind of self-presence which convinces him of his own existence. We might say, at the risk of sounding like a parody of Derrida, that this presence is the presence of an absence, of an "other" who is not there or, at the least, will not always be there. Marcel's attempt to possess this other, to possess its mysterious "otherness," is of course unsuccessful, but this is the only way that he can free himself from dependence on his mother -- or others generally -- and create an independent self. In later life the magical substance that penetrates Marcel's senses appears under the guise of the taste of the madeleine dipped in tea, the sound of the musical phrase in Vinteuil's sonata and septet, the cold, damp, musty smell of the little pavilion in the

Champs-Elysées, the color of the pink hawthorns, or light itself, emanating from the eyes of the Duchesse de Guermantes or from the aptly-named magic lantern or reflected off the tops of church steeples at sunset. But always the magical substance is the highly distilled essence of an "other" one would like to possess -- the world outside oneself, or deep inside oneself, out of reach, forgotten. And, once possessed, this foreign substance always turns out to be, simply, oneself, the mysterious essence that one likes to think of as one's "self": as Marcel remarks after tasting the madeleine, "this essence was not in me, it was myself" (S34/I,45). So it is not simply his mother that Marcel wishes to possess but the "otherness" in which he hopes to find the secret of his own identity.

Like Stephen Dedalus, who is fond of the odor of "horse piss and rotted straw" (P 86), Marcel likes the musty, sooty, down-to-earth smell of the little pavilion (that is, the public toilet) as much as the fragrance of flowers or the "perfume" of the tea-soaked madeleine. In fact, the odor of the little pavilion is associated with the adjacent gardens of the Champs-Elysees, and after "wrestling" with Gilberte in the bushes, Marcel comes down with an illness that may be related to his asthmatic choking fits. Moreover, the "perfume" of his Aunt Léonie's lime<u>flower</u> tea conjures up the image of another "little pavilion" behind his aunt's house, which also opens onto a garden, as well as "all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne" (S36/I,47). Breath means life to Proust, but all these volatile, ephemeral essences represent tiny, homeopathic

doses of the "life" outside him that the Proustian artist (like the Joycean) both fears and needs in order to survive, the magical, supernatural mana that animates an animistic universe. He too seems to feel that "life" belongs to others, to mothers, and the dangerous, uncontrollable mana that animates the universe originates for him in a mother's unpredictable love. Proust's metaphor of the artist becoming a mother to his work is less graphic, less literal-minded than Joyce's, but he too seems to imagine the artist impregnated or inoculated -- through the eye or mouth or nose or ear (or somewhere else?) -- by the fertile, lifegiving essence that enables him to give birth to art. This artist is not impregnated by words, like Joyce's dreamer, but Marcel specifically identifies the "essence" of life with the idea of metaphor.

Elstir's paintings, for example, "recreate" the world by extracting, "from the chaos that is all the things we see," isolated images detached and set apart from everything else (JF300/I,834), like the discrete, selfcontained images that become Stephen Dedalus's epiphanies. But these images undergo a kind of metamorphosis -- "analogous to what in poetry we call metaphor" (JF300/I,835), says Marcel -- whereby they are transformed from our conventional representation of them into our original, immediate, sensory impression of them: "according to the optical illusions of which our first sight of them is composed" (JF303/I,838). It is this kind of metamorphosis, not merely a blurring of vision, that makes Elstir, in his picture of Carquethuit harbor, paint the town in "marine terms" and the sea in "urban terms," just as a poet might describe church steeples in terms

of the masts of ships or young girls in terms of blossoming flowers. The replacement of the land by the contiguous sea, or vice versa, seems more like metonymy than metaphor, but the exchange of signs between two completely different things, the transformation of one into the other, is more clearly metaphorical. Even the isolated images that Elstir seems to extract from the world around him are not just random snapshots but, in effect, metaphors for the real world. In a more complex and subtle way, Elstir's portrait of "Miss Sacripant," rather than merely (metonymically?) blurring the distinction between male and female, endows one with the "signs" and attributes of the other, transforms one into the other, and turns that boyish, girlish face topped with short hair into a metaphor for the opposite sex, for the ambiguity of sexual identity. In short, Elstir's paintings are not strictly realistic but neither do they abandon reality for a strictly imaginary world; instead, they transform ambiguous images into signs or metaphors of a hidden, underlying reality.

As Proust finally formulates it, the task of the artist is not simply to escape into a private world, no matter how beautiful, but to discover the complex structures that seem to govern our lives. In Marcel's words: "What we call reality is a certain connection between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them -- a connection that is suppressed in a simple cinematographic vision, which just because it professes to confine itself to the truth in fact departs widely from it -- a unique connection which the writer has to rediscover in order to link forever

in his phrase the two sets of phenomena which reality joins together." (TR147/III,889) The writer's prototypical phrase, microcosm of the writer's art, is not just an ineffable, airy nothing, the sign of a fine style, but a locus or condensation of meanings, like the puns and wordplays of Finnegans Wake. Again Marcel uses the word metaphor, this time to mean not the identification of two things separated in space but of two sensations separated in time: "by comparing a quality common to two sensations, we succeed in extracting their common essence and in reuniting them to each other, liberated from the contingencies of time, within a metaphor" (TR147/III,889). The "common essence" revealed in a metaphor is finally the magical "otherness" which impregnates the self, the essence common to self and other, just as in Finnegans Wake language itself is equated with a woman's urine, which, endowed with magical properties, fertilizes a man's imagination.

Proust's "metaphor" is like a multiple-exposure image which does not simply blur the outlines between contiguous things but, by superimposing discrete images, establishes a structural, a paradigmatic connection between them.[16] In these terms art reveals the kind of underlying relations which give reality a human meaning, specifically a structure of recurrence whereby, as in Fruedian psychology, lost or forgotten "impressions" underlie current ones. Freud interprets this structure of recurrence in terms of the return of the repressed, repetition compulsion, the uncanny, and even the death instinct, but Marcel finds this "uncanny" repetition joyful. Instead of feeling bound to the past, Marcel feels liberated from time, and it is the

structure of metaphor that makes this liberation possible.

Proust's name of metaphor for the bit of reality that we discover, already existing, in ourselves may seem arbitrary and imprecise, but he is underscoring a fundamental truth about the nature of imagination: there is no such thing as pure fantasy, nor can we perceive a pure reality unstructured by our past experience. As Lacan implies, metaphor is not just a figure of speech but the essential structure of imagination, which means that we assimilate new experiences into old ones, take one thing for another, and treat "real things" as signs of our own fantasies. In the most "fantastic" works of fiction, such as myths, fantasies that cannot really happen purport to be real, but there is always some semblance of reality: giants are like men, only bigger; a man whose head has been cut off picks it up and walks away, which is conceivable but not likely. The most "realistic" works take verisimilitude, semblance to reality, as their basic principle, but this reality is composed of the "signs" the writer expects to find in the real world, metaphors for "real" things, like Joycean epiphanies that claim to capture the "whatness" of reality. We have seen how the multiple-meaning puns and double-entendres of Finnegans Wake, which imitate the logic of dreams, seem to make words and things (shut/shit, wit/wet) interchangeable, as if words were metaphors for things and "things" were metaphors for the imaginary elements of fantasy. Joyce specifically identifies words with urine as magically fertile substances, but which is a metaphor for which?

In the first chapter of A Portrait, "real life" seems to be represented for Stephen by the cold slimy water in the ditch behind

the outhouse, the dirty water sucked down a drain, the "earthy" rainwater of the countryside, and the warm turfcolored bogwater of the bath; these are the signs of the reality that attracts and repels him at the same time. This recurrent, almost obsessive image of "dirty water," alternately warm and cold like the bed after he has wet it (P 7), becomes the "sordid tide of life" (P 98) that threatens to overflow the "breakwater of order and elegance" that he has erected, that threatens to drown him. Here the "tide" is merely a metaphor for the squalid disorder of "real" life, but later he walks near a real breakwater and dreads "the cold infrahuman odour of the sea" (P 167) as if it might literally drown him: "O, cripes, I'm drownded!" (P 169) cries one of his friends splashing in the water. In Ulysses, where a drowned man is fished from the sea, Stephen's fear of drowning is so great, so irrational, so phobic, that he doesn't even like to wash. It is not simply the sea that he fears but the metaphorical "tides within him," the dangerous, uncontrollable impulses that threaten to overwhelm him: "From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers" (P 98), just as he couldn't prevent the water from literally wetting his bed. In Finnegans Wake the water tends to come from without, from someone else, but it is still identified with bodily fluids.

In short, language seems to take the place of life in Finnegans Wake, but words themselves are identified with the sordid, seductive tide of life, as if one could take possession of life (could live) by assimilating words and using them to replace the life they seem to represent. So, in the first chapter of A Portrait, Stephen

is obsessed not only by squalid images of life but by the mysterious meanings of words, especially words with more than one meaning, and if words do not always enable him to make sense of reality, they can always be used to construct a new reality (out of the pieces of the old), like the "green rose" he unwittingly creates out of the wild rose and the green place in the song. Like an alchemist or a primitive shaman, Joyce turns wet, "dirty," bodily life into art, but his literal use of metaphor appears to imply that words are literally urine, art is literally shit. Joycean puns (shut/shit, wit/wet) condense more than one meaning, but the point is not that one meaning is "manifest" and the other "latent," one conscious and the other unconscious, one real and the other imaginary. The very idea of metaphor, which makes the imaginary seem real -- a sea of dirty water threatening to drown us, a man giving birth to poetry -- also translates reality into the signs of fantasy. Joyce's magically fertile substance (urine) signifies, like Proust's precious essences, the animistic "life" that belongs to the world outside oneself, which one has to try to make one's own, and it is the metaphorical possibilities of language -- of literature generally -- that make this appropriation possible.

As I have suggested, Lacan's argument that "the unconscious" has the structure of language breaks down the distinction between literary and psychoanalytic categories. The jokes and slips of the tongue that Freud analyzed are miniature verbal structures like the puns and wordplays of Finnegans Wake, and dreams, while not expressly verbal, reveal the same quasi-linguistic structures of substitution, condensation, and displacement. Even neurotic symptoms reflect the

substitution and displacement of unacknowledged desires: phobias like little Hans's turn animals into symbolic, metaphorical substitutes for something else; a fetish, if it is not simply a metonymic displacement of desire (from body to clothes), is a symbolic, metaphorical substitute for a phallus. Indeed, the infantile sexual theories that Joyce appropriates in Finnegans Wake depend upon complex transformations of something into something else, like the literal/metaphorical identifications of feces, gift, money, baby, and phallus that Freud analyzes in a famous essay on anality.[17] Beginning with the "Project for a Scientific Psychology," Freud kept trying to construct a mechanistic, physical-science model for psychological processes,[18] but the heart of the Freudian enterprise is not the shaky, pseudoscientific instinct (libido) theory, nor even the facile, allegorical model of ego, superego, and id.[19] The most significant discovery that Freud made, anticipating the quasi-linguistic models of structuralism, is his theory of symbolic identification, of the transformation of meanings, of the metaphorical substitution of fantasy for "reality." From this point of view the central Freudian texts are the "semiological" studies of dreams, jokes, and verbal slips, the case histories that "deconstruct" and interpret private, individual "myths," as well as many shorter studies of how fantasies work, how meanings are transformed.

Moreover, reading literature ought to make us realize that the metaphorical structure of fantasies is not necessarily a property of unconscious thought. The metaphorical, "linguistic" structure that Lacan is talking about is the structure of what I have called

the imagination, which, in bridging the gap between reality and fantasy, puts unconscious fantasies into conscious terms: the intense self-absorption of both Joyce and Proust is, in effect, an attempt to make the unconscious conscious. But there is no such thing as the imagination just as there is no such thing as the unconscious: imagination is simply the structure (the logical process) of identification and transformation, whose basic paradigm is the metaphor. This is not the place for a wholesale reinterpretation of Freud, which in its own way the French "return to Freud" -- admirably exemplified by Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis's thorough, lucid, and indispensable "dictionary" of psychoanalytic concepts. The Language of Psychoanalysis -- has already begun.[20] But we may use the examples of Proust and Joyce to illustrate a Freudian theory of metaphor and, at the same time, a metaphorical, "semiological" theory of Freud.

We should recognize, however, that the definitions of metaphor proposed by Proust, Lacan, and modern linguistic theorists are not identical. The disparity between the "signifier" and what it seems to signify opens up a field of metaphorical possibilities, as if any signifier were already a metaphor for the "signified." Lacan equates metaphor, the substitution of one signifier for another, with the Freudian process of condensation in dreams, in which one signifier is superimposed on another, as in verbal puns. But as Jean Laplanche warns us, in a postscript to an article focusing on the metaphorical structure of dreams: "To proclaim hastily that Freudian displacement is metonymy and condensation metaphor is to choose to ignore much

information and many developments for which we are indebted to Freud as well as to the linguists, to skip (to say the least) numerous mediations."[21] Rather than insist on a strict interpretation of metaphor and condensation, it might be more fruitful to consider metaphor (like the images in dreams) as a condensation of literal and figurative meanings which undermines the distinction between literal and figurative meaning, a condensation of signifiers in which each one signifies the other. The deliberate confusion of words and "things" in Joyce's prankquean tale, where verbal "wit" signifies something wet and the answer "shut" signifies a piece of shit, is a case in point. For both meanings are "present," and it is in fact the interplay between literal and figurative meanings, the Derridaean "différance" between wit and wet, which is the source of the wit, which makes the joke (for the reader) both funny and meaningful.[22]

We have seen how the traditional literary identification of flowers and women (as in the medieval Roman de la Rose) becomes in Proust a complex metaphor for sexuality.[23] There are "real" flowers in the Recherche, but the flowers in the phrase jeunes filles en fleurs (the signifier) signify as well the emerging sexuality of adolescent girls (the signified). The metaphor en fleurs includes a literal meaning (flowers) and a figurative one (sexuality), but this is not merely an abstract analogy between plants and people. As the corresponding metaphor of "deflowering" suggests, flowering may signify the presence of a specific, literal "flower," the literal sign of an imaginary anatomy. Moreover, the imaginary token of virginity that is lost in the sexual act of "deflowering" signifies an ephemeral presence

that can, by definition, turn into an absence. Reversing the usual rule that males possess visible, prominent sexual organs and females don't, Proust endows women -- at least adolescent girls -- with an ambiguous sexual possession which men desire to "steal." If Marcel finds himself à l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs, in the shadow of these flowers, it may be because -- as in the opening pages of the Recherche -- he is not able to see just what is there and what isn't.

The ephemeral possession signified by the flower becomes finally -- like the flower that Joyce's prankquean pulls out of her bag of tricks -- the ambiguous sign of the opposite sex, the magical, even illusory "presence" of the "other" which one would like to have for oneself. In these terms the male/female dichotomy is reduced to a distinction between self and other, and the self/other dichotomy becomes simply a distinction between presence and absence, the mana-filled presence that (because it always belongs to the "other") is always absent, signified by its own absence. The red/white, rosy/pale contrast in the prankquean tale becomes finally an opposition between colored and "blank" (Fr. blanc, white). These binary oppositions remind us that the two terms joined in a metaphor are not only similar but different, just as Proust's pink hawthorns are different enough from the white ones to make them seem new and special. By the same token, the present impression (in Proust's metaphorical structure of reminiscence) repeats the past impression, but in a new context, in a new way. The task of the metaphor is to find the "common essence" uniting the two impressions, to overcome the difference between them, but the difference -- like the difference between pink and white

hawthorns -- helps to reveal the essential meaning of the impression, of the hawthorns. Derrida's radical notion of "différance" emphasizes, at the very least, the role of differences in the production of meaning, and all "structuralist" theories are based on binary oppositions like the one between metaphor and metonymy. The purpose of myth, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, "is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction,"[24] but we may add that every metaphor is itself a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction, the contradiction between two terms that are different yet essentially the same. The opposition between pink and white, rosy and pale, is only a sign of the deeper, more fundamental opposition between "literal" and "figurative" meanings, between "real" and "imaginary" possibilities.

In one sense the metaphor of the flower signifies (condenses) two opposite, reciprocal meanings (presence and absence), but in a deeper sense it signifies nothing at all (an absent presence). This conclusion should underscore the primacy of the signifier over the signified, but we should realize that the "nothing" that is signified is the elusive, ephemeral "presence" that metaphor itself tries to bring into being. Derrida warns us against applying a metaphysics of presence to the universe of the written text, but every writer (every text) tries to create -- out of the "différance" between signifier and signified, between literal and figurative meanings, between presence and absence -- a new presence. A quixotic task? The "fetishistic" flowers of jeunes filles en fleurs -- or of the prankquean -- do not really exist, but they are not mere delusions by which Proust or Joyce

hides from himself (represses) the painful truth about women.[25] They represent an attempt to understand what women mean to men, to overcome the mysterious "difference" and disturbing "otherness" of women. The logic of metaphor makes this possible, not simply by turning "presence" into a fictional problem rather than a physical one but by revealing that it always was a fictional problem, a problem of imagination, a problem in the construction and interpretation of signs.

Randolph N. Splitter

FOOTNOTES

1. See Jacques Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud," Écrits, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 146-78. See also Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study," French Freud, Yale French Studies, 48 (1972), 118-75.

2. See Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," Selected Writings II (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 239-59; David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 73-124; and Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology (New York: Hill & Wang, 1968), pp. 58-60.

3. See Gérard Genette, "Métonymie chez Proust," Figures III (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 41-63. Genette has effectively demonstrated the metonymical context in which the Proustian metaphor operates, especially the contiguous associations which an initial "metaphorical" reminiscence may provoke. But metaphor plays a central, essential role in Proust and in literature generally.

4. The references in the text are, first, to the Vintage paperback edition of the English translation of Remembrance of Things Past, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff & (for the last volume) Andreas Mayor, 7 vols. (New York: Random House, 1970-71), although I abbreviate the French titles as follows: Du côté de chez Swann (S), À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs (JF), Le Côté de Guermantes (G), Sodome et Gomorrhe (SG), La Prisonnière (P), La Fugitive (F), and Le Temps Retrouvé (TR). The corresponding references to the French text are to the Pléiade edition of À la recherche du temps perdu, ed. Pierre Clarac and Andre Ferre, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1954). I quote from the English translation in order to make this paper accessible to a wider group of readers.

References to Joyce's writings, in the text, will be from the following editions: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking Press, 1964) (P), Ulysses (New York: Vintage, 1961) (U), and Finnegans Wake (New York: Viking Press, 1959) (FW). I trust that there will be no confusion in references to Joyce's Portrait and Proust's Prisonnière, both represented by P.

5. Marcel associates the pink flowers with certain special foods, but I don't think this exhausts the reasons for his interest in them.

6. See Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. & ed.

James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 21, 152-7. See also "The Taboo of Virginity," Standard Edition, 11, 193-208.

7. See Mark Schechner, Joyce in Nighttown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 211-9.

8. See Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

9. Cf. Ernest Jones, "The Symbolic Significance of Salt in Folklore and Superstition," Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis (London: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1923), pp. 112-203.

10. See Freud, "On the Sexual Theories of Children," Standard Edition, 9, 205-26.

11. Samuel Beckett, "Dante, Bruno, Vico, Joyce," in Our Exagmination Round His Factification For Incamination of Work in Progress (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1939), p. 14.

12. See Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

13. See the article with this title by Ernest Jones in Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis, pp. 261-359. See also my article

"The sane and Joyful Spirit," James Joyce Quarterly, 13, 3 (Spring 1976), 350-65.

14. See Jacob A. Arlow, "The Madonna's Conception Through the Eyes," Psychoanalytic Study of Society, 3 (1964), 13-25.

15. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, Proust and Signs (New York: Braziller, 1972).

16. Cf. Gérard Genette, "Proust palimpseste," Figures 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 39-67, and Paul de Man, "Proust et l'allegorie de la lecture," in Mouvements premiers: études critiques offertes à Georges Poulet (Paris: Corti, 1971), pp. 231-50.

17. Freud, "On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Erotism," Standard Edition, 17, 125-34.

18. See Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

19. These theories and models do, however, reflect Freud's lifelong attempt to find a structure that would accommodate, perhaps even overcome, the dualistic oppositions of pleasure and pain, self and other, life and death.

20. Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis (New York: Norton, 1974). See also French Freud: Structural

Studies in Psychoanalysis, Yale French Studies, 48 (1972), which includes Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," and Laplanche & Leclaire, "The Unconscious."

21. Laplanche, "Postscript" to "The Unconscious," p. 177.

22. On Derrida's complex notion of "différence," a neologism which includes difference, differentiation, and deferral among its meanings, see Jacques Derrida, "Differance," included with Speech and Phenomena (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 129-60. ("La différance," in Théorie d'ensemble (Paris: Seuil, 1968), pp. 41-66.) See also "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, ed. Richard Macksey & Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 247-65.

23. On the "symbolism" of flowers in dreams, including red flowers, see Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," Standard Edition, 4, 319 & 5, 347-8, 374-6.

24. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," Structural Anthropology (vol. 1) (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 229.

25. To the Freudian theory of the fetish, we should add Lacan's point that a "phallus" is already a magical, symbolic possession which

may be lost, if it has not already been. See Lacan, "The signification of the phallus," Écrits (English trans.), pp. 281-91.